

## Clear-Cut Statement from Mr. Calhoun

From the Tampa Tribune, March 4.

Editor Tribune: So much has been said in the State press about the difficulty and scandal at Stetson University, and there is such an evident trend in a portion of the press to favor one side of the controversy, that I ask room for a summary—brief as may be—of the circumstances attending the affair from the beginning. I have had personal interest and reason to induce me to give the matter a thorough investigation from an entirely unbiased standpoint. I would like to make my conclusions public through your columns.

The main point at issue is whether Dr. Stetson, president of the institution, has been guilty of criminal misconduct with one of the female teachers. This has been charged upon him. If true, he should have been removed from his place. If untrue, the proceedings of the trustees who removed Mr. Stetson from the presidency of their board and confirmed Dr. Forbes in the presidency and administration of the institution are fully justified.

I will first consider the question of the guilt or innocence of Dr. Forbes. Last July an attorney of DeLand, who represented himself as acting for Mr. Stetson, exhibited to me a mass of affidavits which he had secured against Dr. Forbes and the lady in question, and which, I believe, comprise all he has been able to obtain up to this date. In it all there was not a shred of what any court would call evidence. I gave it careful consideration. There was absolutely nothing in it but hearsay and rumor, the idiosyncrasy of a man whom Dr. Forbes had detected in stealing systematically from the university, and whom he had discharged from his connection with it. A man who was afterwards dismissed in disgrace from the Methodist ministry for theft, lying, profane and obscene language and wife beating. His testimony evidently rank perjury, based upon a desire for revenge—equally evidently prepared with much skill to steer clear of any assertion of fact which could be rebutted to prove its falsity—was not of the slightest force in showing a state of facts as alleged.

This testimony was unsupported by a solitary assertion of fact in the accompanying affidavits, numerous as they were.

The matter has been the subject of three official investigations. The first was by a committee, composed of Mr. Stetson, Rev. Wm. H. Stewart and Rev. Dr. George B. Foster of Chicago, the latter being a special representative of the University of Chicago, with which Stetson University is closely affiliated. This committee, of which Mr. Stetson was a member, unreservedly exonerated and acquitted Dr. Forbes. The second examination was made by a large committee, which arrived at the same conclusion. The third was made by the entire board of trustees—twenty-one gentlemen of the highest standing—and the board was unanimous in the same finding. It is a well known principle of law that a man shall not be twice placed in jeopardy for the same offense. Yet Dr. Forbes was three times brought to trial for the same alleged misconduct. Each time he was honorably acquitted with the supplementary verdict that there had never been shown against him a circumstance which justified the slightest suspicion.

It would ordinarily be supposed that this would be sufficient to settle the matter forever—but it seems not to have done so in this case. The pursuit of Dr. Forbes continued, and his assailants appealed to the newspapers and to public opinion. Unable to make a case against him before the proper tribunals, they undertook to undermine public confidence in his fitness to be the head of the institution—without the evident purpose of weakening it to such an extent that he would be compelled to resign. They would rather, apparently, destroy the school than see him successfully administer it. This stage of the case justifies my interference by this letter.

A brief review of the circumstances is now in order. Mr. Stetson was not the founder of the school, but his services and contributions largely made possible its present power and value. Dr. Forbes was eighteen years ago, its president and administrator, before Mr. Stetson came to DeLand at all. Under his direction and control the school grew beyond the intentions of Mr. Stetson and the hopes of its president. As a vigorous and energetic man, Dr. Forbes undertook to expand the school to meet the demand for educational facilities in Florida—to make it, in fact, as well as in name, a real university. This seems to have encountered the disapproval of Mr. Stetson, whereupon Dr. Forbes appealed successfully to others for aid. Now comes in an element which must be added to with the utmost delicacy, and with much hesitation. At the time Dr. Forbes inaugurated some enlargements—namely Science Hall, costing \$60,000—Mrs. Stetson appears on the scene and seems to have taken the matter out of the hands of her husband. Mr. Stetson is claimed to have been fearful that the requirements of the school in a financial way would outrun his means, or the means he had provided for it in his mind and will. Dr. Forbes assured him that such was not the case, but that it would be self-sustaining on the enlarged basis. It seems that this assurance was well founded, as the school is paying its way, including the building of Science Hall, without drawing upon Mr. Stetson for any deficiency—which it had not done previously. This fully vindicates both the judgment and the administration of Dr. Forbes and proves that he had a correct estimate of the demand for higher education in Florida.

Notwithstanding he had twice signed reports and findings entirely and honorably exculpating Dr. Forbes, Mr.

Stetson—or his ostensible representatives—remained implacable, and the millionaire benefactor of the institution gave it out that he had cut out from his will the legacy he had intended for the school. This brought up to the board of Trustees the question of choice between the man who had given of his surplus and the man who had given his life-work—the man who gave money in sustenance and the man who had given ability and talent and judgment and skill, and who had conferred success in practical operation. They wisely decided in favor of the man who had bestowed life in preference to the man who had bestowed money only. The man who gave money had been rewarded by having the institution named in his honor, he had been acclaimed a noble philanthropist—he had got the worth of his money. The other man must have been content with the sense of duty performed and the affection of the young men and women whom he had so greatly benefited, and for him there is no other reward.

It is impossible to explain or account for Mr. Stetson's attitude and conduct except upon grounds which I will not express in words, lest he might be blamed for things for which he is not personally responsible. He is to be duly honored for what he has done, and it would be unbecoming and ungrateful to detract in the least from the credit due him. The people of Florida appreciate it, and are grateful—but intelligent and fair-minded public sentiment will approve the judgment of the board of trustees, regretful that the occasion arose for that body to make a decision.

This is a very brief and insufficient resume of the incident, but it is true that in no detail of the circumstances—which have necessarily been omitted—is there the shadow of anything that would lead to other conclusion than Dr. Forbes and the trustees who sustain him are entirely in the right.

J. D. CALHOUN.

From the Times-Union, March 14.

We have carefully read every line of the statement published in the Supplement of March 4 by the trustees of Stetson University; and it is painfully apparent from this that the millionaire, once so clear and capable, has fallen into his dotage. At one time he sent his wife down to DeLand and demanded of the trustees a transfer of the entire property of the university to her! There is no evidence against Forbes except that of the wife-beater and thief whose dismissal from the office of steward caused him to seek revenge against the president. If the trustees allow themselves to be scared or badgered into a removal of Forbes they will show a more truckling subservience to a once great financier than we believe any dozen manly Floridians are capable of. It would be an act of sheer cowardice.

### People Credit Rumors Too Freely.

From the DeLand Record, January 31.

People, as a general rule, are too prone to credit rumors of a scandal, especially if such rumors affect the standing and good name of one who is prominent and stands high in the estimation of the people of the community or state in which the party attacked resides. It is a deplorable condition of the mind of man or woman which nurtures or even disseminates rumors that affect the good name of a neighbor or a citizen of a community, and more heartless it becomes to continue to agitate, distort and credit rumors that have been investigated and proven false in every particular by an eminent court of inquiry, as was done in the case affecting the conduct of a leading and prominent citizen of this place. It does the town and its people a great injustice and brings neither credit nor honor to the party or parties which discredit the finding of such a court. People should remember that there are always two sides to a question, and a conservative, unprejudiced and upright man will not give credit or publicity to a matter affecting the character and good standing of a neighbor without just cause and indisputable facts to substantiate his decision.

### Pursued System of Persecution.

From the Orlando Record, March 9.

The Stetson side of the university imbroglio has had its innings in the newspapers of the state, but the defense has hardly been heard, until now the trustees of the university issue a full, complete and convincing statement of their side of the question.

They show, beyond peradventure of a doubt that Stetson has pursued a systematic course of persecution against President Forbes in his endeavors to have that gentleman removed from the presidency; that his course has been one of misrepresentation and deception; that there was no whitewashing of President Forbes in the late report; on the contrary, they show that Stetson did not at any time desire an investigation and fought it as long as he could; they show that in their investigation of the charges, they went into the matter thoroughly, taking all kinds of evidence, suspicions, rumors and talk of every kind, investigating fully every hint of wrong doing, and yet finding nothing on which to base a charge against Dr. Forbes, a judgment that Stetson himself is on record as having fully endorsed.

The whole trouble seems to have been caused by the interference of Mrs. Stetson, the jealousy of Mr. Stetson and the underhand, villainous work of the creature whom Stetson employed as an attorney.

The cases now in the Federal courts will bring out the whole truth in the matter, and there can be but little doubt that Dr. Forbes will receive full and fair vindication.

## Two Letters and An Affidavit

AFFIDAVIT OF GEORGE M. FORBES.

STATE OF NEW YORK,  
COUNTY OF MONROE,  
CITY OF ROCHESTER.

George M. Forbes, of Rochester, N. Y., being duly sworn, deposes and says: that in the latter part of June, 1902, he received a letter from John B. Stetson, of Ashbourne, Pa., requesting him to come to Ashbourne for a personal interview in the interest of his brother, Dr. J. F. Forbes, of DeLand, Fla.; that in response to the invitation he went to Ashbourne and had an interview with Mr. Stetson, Mrs. Stetson being present the greater part of the time and taking part in the conversation; that the following statements are based upon written memoranda made by him upon the same day and immediately after the interview:

Deponent states that the very positive impression derived from the conversation of both Mr. and Mrs. Stetson was that the real issue they both stated explicitly that they did not then, and had not at any time, considered him guilty of anything more than an indiscretion. The real issue seemed to be a personal grievance growing out of the question of Dr. Forbes' resignation, and of the motives which he had ascribed to Mr. Stetson in explaining his action in the matter. Deponent states that this impression was very strongly confirmed by a document partly read to him by Mrs. Stetson. They stated that it was a document taken by Mrs. Stetson to DeLand during the early vacation and in the absence of Dr. Forbes, and outlining a plan of action for the Executive committee and the Board of Trustees regarding Dr. Forbes. The plan proposed involved an acceptance of Dr. Forbes' resignation, but proposed both on the part of the Executive committee and the Board of Trustees a hearty endorsement of Dr. Forbes' administration and a complete exoneration from any misconduct. The impression that the real issue with Mr. Stetson was Dr. Forbes' retirement from the presidency and not his guilt, and that his sole interest in the matter was personal, and still more strongly confirmed by the correspondence which followed the interview. Deponent had suggested in the interview that the matter could best be settled by dropping all agitation of it and by both parties writing to the members of the Board of Trustees and to the faculty that their differences were satisfactorily adjusted and that they were prepared to co-operate for the good of the university. After the interview, Mr. Stetson wrote to deponent that he put in writing his suggestion, as Mr. Stetson would like to consider it carefully. Deponent complied with this request, and in order to make it absolutely certain that Dr. Forbes' position in regard to any settlement might not be misunderstood, deponent served notice upon Mr. Stetson in writing that "no settlement would be accepted by Dr. Forbes that was not based upon the conviction of his absolute innocence of any conduct unbecoming a man, a Christian, or a gentleman." In Mr. Stetson's reply he commented upon the plan of settlement suggested as follows: "This is all very well for your brother, but where do I come in?" thus ignoring, completely, any question of Dr. Forbes' guilt, and objecting to the proposed settlement solely on the ground that it would not satisfy his personal claims to recognition.

Two other circumstances which occurred during the interview seemed to deponent to prove positively that Mr. and Mrs. Stetson had not been dealing with Dr. Forbes in the spirit of true friendship and good faith, and thus confirmed his impression that the slander interested them only as a means to a further end. Deponent had insisted that the slander had its inception with an employee, discharged by Dr. Forbes, who was notorious as a thief and falsifier, as well as in the jealous rivalries and disappointments of certain women teachers who thought they had a grievance against Dr. Forbes, and that Mr. Stetson, knowing this, could and should have exercised his authority to stop it at its very inception and that he could still do so, if he would. Mr. Stetson admitted in his reply that there was a time when he could have stopped it, but stated that he thought it had now gone too far.

Again, in reply to Mr. Stetson's complaint that Dr. Forbes had impugned his motives, deponent stated that Dr. Forbes had received his intimations as to Mr. Stetson's real motives in the matter chiefly from Mrs. Stetson herself, and then referred to a letter written to Dr. Forbes by Mrs. Stetson in which she referred to her husband as possibly an obstruction to the work of the university and suggested the advisability of his retirement. Mr. Stetson quickly replied: "Yes, we have that letter we know all about it. That letter was written to draw Dr. Forbes out," thus clearly implying that the letter was a trap deliberately worded so as to elicit from Dr. Forbes some expression of a desire for Mr. Stetson's retirement.

The interview made it perfectly clear to deponent that Mr. Stetson considered his authority as absolute regarding the university, and that Dr. Forbes' chief offense was that he had presumed to question that authority and withdraw his tentative resignation contrary to Mr. Stetson's wish. This feeling of absolute ownership of the institution was illustrated by the remark, that he did not know what he should do with it. "He had thought he would turn the whole thing over to him." Another statement of Mr. Stetson's related to the interview between Mr. Stetson, Dr. Foster and Dr. Forbes, when Dr. Forbes made an appeal to Mr. Stetson for justice to Mrs. Mathes, and urged that justice required that, as innocent, she ought to be restored to her position and work in the university.

My dear Mr. Stetson, stated that Dr. Forbes made a very strong and impressive appeal, and that at its close Dr. Foster said "that's a thoroughly manly position," and Mr. Stetson himself added, emphatically, "that is right."

GEORGE M. FORBES.

Sworn to before me, this 2nd day of September, 1902.

GEORGE A. OLIVER,  
Notary Public.

### LETTER FROM MRS. STETSON.

This is the letter referred to in the foregoing affidavit as having been written to draw Dr. Forbes out.

Dear Dr. Forbes:

An impression comes to me often with great force. It is this: Mr. Stetson knows himself to be in a position where he can help the University some, but possibly not sufficiently for the demands of a work which is growing so fast, and I have been wondering if by remaining on the Board he is not thereby hindering the opportunity that might otherwise come of support from other sources. Perhaps I have intimated as much to you before, and I now assume the personal responsibility of writing to you to say that I would like for you to think this matter over and give me your honest, untrammelled opinion of the matter. I think that if he would resign, his place might be better filled and the expansion of the work becoming broader. I do not think he has intentionally retarded the work; but, knowing his limitations, he may have appeared to you to do so. Taking this view of the matter, would it not be better for him to resign? Then the work could be reorganized—the name of the institution could be changed if it would seem wise, and might not the work rally to its support more means under a name that could command more influence, thereby expanding the work and power of the school?

I cannot refrain from writing thus because the thought recurs to me with ever-increasing force and is driven home to me with conviction that now may be the turning of the tide whereby the whole future work of the University may be determined. It seems a shame that so much money should have been placed there, and so much labor as you have personally invested during the last sixteen years, if by one man's position a limitation should be placed on its possibilities.

His resignation need not necessarily remove his interest in the work nor prevent his continued donations to it. What do you think of it?

Very sincerely yours,

Elizabeth Stetson.

May 2d, 1902.

### DR. FORBES' REPLY TO MRS. STETSON.

This is the letter written by Dr. Forbes in reply and which has already been published as reflecting in some way upon the doctor.

DELAND, FLA., May 5, 1902.

My dear Mrs. Stetson:—I received your letter of May 2d last night and hasten to reply. Let me say at the outset with all the emphasis I can command, and with all the sincerity of which I am capable, that I cannot imagine a greater calamity to the University and its work, present and future, than Mr. Stetson's resignation from the Board of Trustees. Such a thing is not to be thought of for a moment, as a matter of right or wrong, but as a matter of inherent justice and right. Mr. Stetson started at the beginning, so far as my work is concerned, and we have worked side by side, and heart to heart, all these years like brothers; he has had a part and a most important part, in every important detail of the work, as we have always talked it over together, and his mature wisdom and sound judgment have gone into every warp and woof of the whole structure—this, of course, without mentioning the fact that he and he alone, has made the whole work possible—mine and his—by his splendid, generous and constant gifts of money. I have depended and do depend on him for support in every phase and department of the work, and have always felt that I could not think it would be hard to duplicate in the history of education in this country.

As to the matter of development of the work in my judgment, our task now is not extension but intensive culture of what we have. I feel an almost irresistible conviction with respect to the future of the University, Law Department and Mechanic Arts, and hence my earnest efforts in that direction, but now we have the foundation. I believe, as I said above, our task is to strengthen and perfect the organization and not to attempt any further expansion in some years at least. I do not believe that a man in this country who is better fitted than Mr. Stetson to guide and advise in this work of strengthening, consolidating and perfecting what we already have. There is a fundamental difference between us on that point, and there is no man on earth who can take his place with me—in my personal affection and respect.

I do not see that any large sum of money will be needed for some years, except we take up the matter of increased endowment, but that can wait very well, if we continue to be prosperous next year as we have been this, as I believe we will.

The outlook for students for next year is very fine indeed, and the only problem to solve will be to secure a little more room for dormitory students.

Let me say in conclusion that nothing I can conceive of could alienate my affection for Mr. Stetson. I never loved my own father better than I love him, and I want to, if I may, work with him so long as we both shall live. No, no, no, by no means, would I advise or allow as far as my power or influence extended, any change whatever in Mr. Stetson's relations to the University, except to make it closer.

With a heart full of gratitude to you for all your kindness, present and past, I am, as ever,

Sincerely yours

J. F. FORBES.

### By the Editor of the Baptist Courier.

Dr. A. J. S. Thomas, editor of the Baptist Courier, Greenville, S. C., says editorially:

"It is a great pity that this opposition to Dr. Forbes has arisen. We have known him well for several years, and we believe he is one of the best men we have, and he has certainly proved by his works that he is a great educator, and a man of superior executive and administrative ability. It will be calamity to the Baptists of Florida, and to the cause of education, if he is driven from his present position. We begin to ask, what is a life of a quarter of a century worth, lived in the open, before the public, in public work, in the interest of the young, in the unbuilding of a community and State, in the cause of the Redeemer, if a man like Dr. Forbes is to be broken down and driven out after his virtues have pronounced him without a peer?"

to mail—

From the Florida Baptist Witness, March 11.

We notice with regret that a few of our state exchanges have entirely misrepresented the matter of the controversy between the Board of Trustees of the University and Mr. Stetson. We are confident that those who made these misrepresentations did so simply from the fact that they were misinformed about the facts of the case. In our long connection with the press of Florida we have found the men who occupy its tripods preeminently fair and just, and we are sure that their usual wisdom and unbiased judgment will not be found wanting in this matter which is so important to the cause of education within the state.

The impression appears to have prevailed that no investigation has been made of the charges against President Forbes. This, however, is not the case. A full and complete investigation was made by the Board of Trustees September 18, every member of which was present in person or by proxy. This investigation occupied the greater part of two days, and every jot and tittle of evidence that could be raked and scraped was presented.

### THE RESULT WAS A UNANIMOUS ACQUITTAL.

This was the SECOND acquittal, and had the sanction of every member of the Board of Trustees. The first acquittal was by a special committee composed of Mr. Stetson, Rev. W. H. Stewart and Prof. G. B. Foster, of Chicago University.

At the last meeting of the Board of Trustees, February 20, it was asked if there was a single trustee who voted against the acquittal, let him then and there say so or form hence hold his peace. Silence followed the announcement. There was no one who made such a claim.

Again, no new evidence has either been found against President Forbes nor has Mr. Stetson sought to offer any.

Again, Mr. Stetson was not expelled from the Board of Trustees. The simple truth is that a chairman of the board is elected every year. When the vote was taken this year, Dr. Chaudoin received the largest number of votes cast and was declared elected. This was a natural result. Mr. Stetson, as one out of sympathy with the University and its administration, was in a position as chairman of the board to greatly hamper the administration, but, as a mere trustee, he would be unable to do so. It was, therefore, felt to be wiser to elect a man who was in harmony with the University. To wise men there is no need of a defense of such a policy.

What, therefore is the position of Mr. Stetson? It is simply that President Forbes must go because he desires him so to do. There is apparent no other motive except President Forbes has offended him, the culmination of that offence being that he declined to give up the position of president of the University when Mr. Stetson told him to do so.

Out of the twenty-four members of the Board of Trustees, six take this position with Mr. Stetson. These are: Rev. David Moore, of Geneva, New York, for many years the intimate personal friend of Mr. Stetson, to whom he is under great personal obligations; Mr. H. A. DeLand, of Fairport, New York. Early in the history of the University, after the Baptists of the state had given a note for \$10,000 in compliance with Mr. DeLand's offer to give \$10,000 for endowment, if they would give the same, Mr. DeLand, at a meeting of the board, refused to formally recognize his obligation to give his \$10,000 or to allow any money he gave to be counted as interest on such obligation. This, notwithstanding the fact the board had a good note from the Baptist State Board of Missions for \$10,000 with interest at eight per cent. Dr. Forbes insisted at a meeting of the board that Mr. DeLand should specifically recognize this obligation, and said that if it were not done, he would write Dr. Chaudoin and notify him that the trustees had no \$10,000, as it was understood by everybody was the case. Mr. DeLand left the meeting in anger but signed a note for \$10,000 afterward. For this he has never forgiven Dr. Forbes. Rev. F. J. Longdon, the pastor of Judge Stewart, who has been so active in his persecutions of President Forbes, the said Judge Stewart being the most prominent member of the Christian (or Disciples) church; Mr. H. B. Stevens, an employee of Mr. Stetson; Mr. Arthur Hamlin, the regularly employed lawyer of Mr. Stetson. We do not make the charge that these men are influenced in their position on this matter by these relationships; but it is a striking coincidence that the men who antagonize President Forbes happen to sustain such relationships.

Mr. T. C. Search, another member of the board, whose proxy Mr. Stetson voted, wrote President Forbes a letter saying that he had written Mr. Stetson to hand in his resignation as a member of the board, in view of the fact that he was so far away and so busy that he felt himself unable to form an opinion on the matter. Mr. Search was for many years a student of Mr. Stetson.

Who are the other members of the board—the men who uphold the more? President Forbes, who has been a member of the board, in view of the fact that he was so far away and so busy that he felt himself unable to form an opinion on the matter. Mr. Search was for many years a student of Mr. Stetson.

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University buildings. Mr. Solomon, a prominent business man of Dayton, Ohio, F. Camp, of White Springs, known all over Florida for business success and upright character; Rev. William H. Stetson, a tired naval chaplain who, DeLand some years ago, his son, who is still a pupil of the University; Mayor Dr. U. R. Jacksonville, of whom it may well be proud for him and pre-eminent ability; a Wright, a prominent insurance man; and a Mason, who has occupied most responsible positions of that order; Prof. F. B. Moodie, of Lake City, a man long noted for his efforts on behalf of the agricultural development of the state, and who is the first trustee of the University; Rev. Thomas J. Sparkman, minister of ability who moved to DeLand years ago to educate boys; Rev. Dr. Holtville, whose occupation speaks for itself; least, the venerable W. N. Chaudoin, for president of the Baptist Convention, and who has labored side with the trustees from the beginning, before Mr. Stetson of the University.

We name these men, not to compare them with the others, except in doing so by asking a simple question: What possible President Forbes have oversplendid men to induce them to leave an innocent man? The dream of a hypnotist over a weakling would not claim apart from any other influence the plea of an unassailable backed by a strong, deeply and strenuous life which has a great institution from a house, a virility and deep his cause such as few could have accomplished. If these men had been in Stetson some motive for apart from the innocent Stetson might be in such was not the case, his friends and co-past history of which they honor ways, proves they have been angry aggressive, prejudice of their best years.

Another chapter of President's present tactics and Lawyer Stewart in frequent consultations at what are these tactics? In a word, are they to be the attendance of student University, on the one hand the other, to so carry Forbes, by continuing, that either his that of his wife shall beneath the strain and he would be resigned? Last gross were the misrepresentation and so pitiless Mrs. Stetson's health of Mrs. Forbes that she was compelled months in a sanitarium, of President Forbes wrecked in consequence knows that this is and, since the trustees were whipped in, he advocates.

Will the humane and Christian men of Florida work of this kind, in the facts? We do not will. Will not the free press inform themselves of both sides of this and take their responsibility, as reasonable men, and principle? We

Spirit of Fairness. From the Miami Metropolis. It is with feelings of Metropolis notes that what appears to it a on the part of many persons in their discussion of Stetson matters.

We have looked persons to find that to the trustees was given to the and slander.

trustees was DeLand News shows Mr. Stetson's investigation" has been said was and not by Mr. later only Forbes' reputation, and refused to show mitted a and heard named Pur as steward a ing, lying, man was no from the Methodist society, netted? It is

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